

## His Sister's Keeper

By Elizabeth Dyke Lewis

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She was only the third lady in the past of the comic opera, but her voice was improving, and she had youth and a good figure to give her hopes of advancement. She entered into her part with an enthusiasm which overlooked the drafty wings and even the chilly barrenness of her own dressing room. She hated her lodgings in the French quarter in West Twenty-fifth street and always longed to get back to the theater.

She was sitting in her dressing room on Wednesday afternoon, ready for the matinee, which was to begin in ten minutes, when the callboy came to the door.

"Why, surely my watch isn't wrong!" she exclaimed, for she was not needed until half past 2. No; only the manager often wanted to speak to her. She came cheerfully forward to see what he wanted. He was standing in his shirt sleeves giving the gas man a dressing about some lights which had ruined the star's costume the night before, but he left his speech in the middle and came to meet her, laying his hand familiarly on her shoulder. He was a big man and rather ugly, but even the chorus girls confessed that he had a way with him. The little singer felt it, too, for she let herself be drawn into the office, and the door shut behind her. Then she gave a flip to her short skirts and perched on the table.

The manager cleared his throat and went to the point.

"You see, Miss Kennedy," he began, "I've been wanting to give you a lift for some time. I can't bounce Miss Gray, of course. She's been on a good while and is used to it. But after this run I do want you to have something better. Now, here's a thing called 'Liberty Belle' that's bound to make a hit some time, and if you like you can take the score home and try Fair Helen's part on your piano. It was simply made for you." He turned the leaves rapidly, showing her the size of the part and a few of the situations and humming a couple of the songs, while his plump forefinger followed the score. "Now," he said, checking off the points on his finger, "here's the scheme in brief: You're Fair Helen, Stevens is the Duke's son, and I'm your manager, and we go off on the road—Pittsburg, you know, and Cincinnati, and perhaps Chicago if it's all right. And now, before you say anything, I want it to be quite understood that the point of the whole thing, to me at least, is that I'm your manager—see? And now, Miss Kennedy, I'm going to make myself believe that you'll think it over the right way. And I guess it's about time for us both to be on the outside of that door, isn't it?"

He opened the door and let her out ahead of him, and she ran into the wings and talked to the chorus girls till her cue came. She joined absently in their laughter at her own jokes, and all the time she was thinking over the manager's proposal.

It sounded very attractive. She knew that she would stand a better chance of real promotion if she held her position in a good "stock." Yet the idea of a star part and presumably higher salary was alluring in the extreme.

She abandoned her reflections as the time came for her to lead the chorus out and to dance while they echoed responses to her song.

"But that I never do!" her song concluded as she brought both feet together with a martial click and salute.

"Ah! That we never do!" echoed the chorus, and then she had to come farther down and do the last verse over again. She could see over the footlights and even distinguish faces in the first three or four rows of the orchestra. The front row was nearly filled by a party of schoolgirls, with their chap-eron, but at the end was a man, who was strangely out of place in that matinee assemblage. She looked beyond him to the old ladies behind and then to the lines of heads in the galleries, but presently she found her glance coming back to him. For a few moments she was tantalized, and then she suddenly remembered where she had met him. It was in quite another life. He could hardly afford to recognize her even if he remembered her, she thought bitterly, and just then his face lighted up, and he stared at her and bowed and smiled in the most friendly way, though he seemed a little uncertain of her returning the salutation. She found a way to do so, however, and when she gave the last whirl to her skirts and ran off she knew that he would take her final bow as meant for him.

She joined the others for a chat in the wings till the end of the act, and when she went to her dressing room she found two fine bouquets of Jack's waiting for her. She looked for the cards. Her first bunch was from a man to whom she had sent a box. He was doubtless there—with his wife and children. She must remember to look when she went on again. But the second! She opened her eyes. He had not only spoken to her; he had sent her flowers! Did it mean that there were others in this world who would take her back again still? The manager and his melodramatic adoration seemed suddenly as far away from her as they would have been a year before. She remembered having read a newspaper clipping which had suggested higher than this for her. "Miss Kennedy's abilities," it had said, "are rather

above her voice, and it would not be amiss for her to see what she could do in legitimate comedy." Indeed she had been thinking seriously of leaving the operatic stage at the close of the present engagement, perhaps for the drama, perhaps for no stage at all. Who could tell? She lifted the flowers and impulsively hurried off to the manager's room.

"I have come," she said, afraid to stop for breath, lest her resolutions should change, "to refuse your very kind offer, for reasons which I cannot explain, and to return you the books." She thrust score and libretto into his hands. He stared at her astonished.

"Why, Miss Clara," he exclaimed, "you will at least take till tomorrow to think it over. You will at least, try the score. You cannot refuse me—surely you!"

"No," she said firmly, for she would have no more words with this man than she could help. "I am sorry if I disappointed you—sorry if I gave you to understand—but this is final, and I must go! There is my call," she added hastily as she heard the song out on the stage drawing to an end. Then she ran out and stood for an instant in the wings.

"I may repent it afterward," she said to herself, "but I won't if I can help it. It was real nice of him sending me those flowers. I am glad, though, that he'll never know how much they happened to mean to me. He'd think it was too silly! I shan't dare to look at him again."

The star brushed past her with a kind jest and a laugh, and she went on, crying to meet a Strephon in blue satin, who vainly endeavored to wipe away her tears. She was too much occupied with her business to have a fair look at the front seats. After a few explanatory sobs on her part Strephon, with histrionic intuition, seemed to grasp the situation, and they advanced to the footlights together, joining in a duet. The air was familiar to every street boy now, and unless she gave it her entire attention each person in the audience would think that he had heard it better done. She dared not glance even once to the spot toward which she was half unconsciously acting all the time, but when she ran out for the last time she thought that a certain lifting of her eyelashes and a saucy shrug of one shoulder just as she kissed her hand in that same direction would be accepted as reparation for her apparently cold treatment. She almost fancied a gleam of gratitude as warm as her own coming toward her from the golden haze of the footlights on the end.

That sent, had she but seen it, was empty. It had been empty since the first scene. The man in a box of the upper tier scarcely remembered that he knew one of the girls on the cast. He was engrossed for the present in quite a different sort of young woman—the one for whom he had brought some flowers and whom he had been able to find only after the second act. She was sitting a little behind the rest of her party, and as he leaned over her chair she bent her head back until it almost touched his arm and laughed softly into his eyes at something he had said. There was a charming understanding between them. They had both forgotten that there was any one on the stage.

### Some Historical Windows.

In history and literature the window holds a conspicuous place. There is the window in Leven Castle tower through which the wistful eyes of Mary, queen of Scots, strained their gaze across the lonely lake; there is the window in Greenwich palace from which Elizabeth both waved her farewells to her brave seamen as they set forth in their tiny "cockboats" to seek a westward path to far Cathay.

There is the window in the tower through which the aged Laud stretched his hands in benediction as Strafford passed onward to his death; there is the window "in Carlsbrook's narrow case," which baffled the unfortunate Charles in his attempt to escape; there is the window in the Louvre from which that other and guiltier Charles witnessed the massacre of St. Bartholomew.

Then there is the window in the narrow Linlithgow street from which Bothwellnaugh shot "the good Earl of Murray," and the window in the High street of Edinburgh whence Argyle watched the chivalrous Montrose borne onward to his scaffold, with never a thought or forecast of what his own fate would be.—London Standard.

### A Really Poor Author.

When Dr. Johnson was a resident of Grub street, he made the acquaintance of a poet named Samuel Boyse, whose poem on the Deity and other works had earned him high praise. Boyse could not go abroad to seek work because his clothes were in pawn, so he lay abed with his arms thrust through two holes in the insective blanket, which was the only covering, writing and starving. Johnson raised enough money to get his clothes for him, but two days later Boyse was in bed again, eating a stew of beef and mushrooms purchased by the repawning of his suit. "I might as well eat while I may," he said, "for I must some day starve, whether I will or not."

### Ancient Gold.

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